

Local Government Administration Autonomy and Issues Around Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria

¹Precious Msendoo Aondona, ²Ihom, A.P. and Imbur, ²T. Moses

¹University of Ibadan –Nigeria, Department of Political Science

²University of Uyo, Uyo-Nigeria

Corresponding Author's Address:

+234-8035813571, ihomaondona@uniuyo.edu.ng

DOI: [10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no11.2025.pg176.188](https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.vol.11.no11.2025.pg176.188)

Abstract

This topic local government administration and autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations is a very cogent and relevant topic. Here in this paper local government administration autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations in Nigeria has been exhaustively discussed. A lot of battles have been fought, back and forth by the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) for autonomy and freedom to operate as a third tier of government for grass-root development. This struggle actually started with the advent of the fourth republic and democratic rule in May, 1999, when there was so much perceived encroachment by the state governments on the autonomy of the local governments. At the commencement of the democratic rule in 1999 the civilian government maintained the intergovernmental relations that existed during the military administration. However, after four years of the civilian administration some state governors started questioning the financial autonomy of the local governments, which is the third tier of government. This issue became a cause of concern for many Nigerians and the federal government, this led to the passing of a bill for financial autonomy by the National Assembly in 2024 which was equally assented to by the President of the federal republic of Nigeria. This action has become a reason for legal tussle between the state governors who are challenging local government autonomy and the federal government. The supreme court of Justice in Nigeria has affirmed the law, but unfortunately the implementation of the law is far from being achieved. This paper looks at the three-tier system of government in Nigeria, different types of government, local government administration in Nigeria, local administration during pre-colonial and colonial era, local government autonomy, intergovernmental relations between the three-tiers of government, local government administration and autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations, conclusion, and recommendations for repositioning local government for effective local government administration in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Three-tiers of government, Local government, Autonomy, Administration, Intergovernmental relations, Federal government, State government.*

Introduction

This topic local government administration and autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations is a very cogent and relevant topic. A lot of battles have been fought, back and forth by the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) for autonomy and freedom to operate as a third tier of government for grass-root development. This struggle actually started with the advent of the fourth republic and democratic rule in May, 1999, when there was so much

perceived encroachment by the state governments on the autonomy of the local governments (Aleyomi, 2013). At the commencement of the democratic rule in 1999 the civilian government maintained the intergovernmental relations that existed during the military administration. However, after four years of the civilian administration some state governors started questioning the financial autonomy of the local governments, which is the third tier of government (Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014). Wikipedia defines local government as the generic term used for the lowest tier of governance or public administration within a particular sovereign state. They wanted all the monthly federal allocations accrued to the local governments to be paid into the state government accounts upon which a state joint account will be held and the state will allocate what they feel the local governments deserve to them (Abati and Kugbayi, 2020).

Since the 1950s, when the federal system came into operation in Nigeria, local government administration has received considerable scholarly attention (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Adeyemi, 2019, Etebom and Wijaya, 2023; Chinda, 2016 Akindele and Olaopa, 2002) observed four major epochs in the development of the local government system in Nigeria: (i) colonial rule, which was based on the traditional administrative system, and existed from 1903 until the 1950s when the native authority system became obsolete; (ii) the more liberal and participatory approach to local governance introduced in the 1950s; (iii) the advent of military rule, which replaced the model of grassroots participatory democracy with military centralisation and a 'unity of command' scheme; and (iv) the comprehensive reform of local government administration in 1976, which restored liberal participatory values.

The impact of these last two epochs on the structure and operational dynamics of local government in Nigeria is still felt. Firstly, the centralisation introduced under military rule has remained a major influence in the relationship between the federal government and local government. Secondly, the reform of local government in 1976 has continued to shape subsequent discourse and reforms. It is instructive to note that the 1976 reform acknowledged the local government system as government at local level, established by law, with defined powers (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015).

Intergovernmental relations can be defined as the interaction between the three tiers of government (federal, state, and local) for the purpose of a harmonious administration of the entire country. This interaction can be in the form of administration, political, economic, social and cultural for the purpose of enhancing smooth bureaucratic governance in the country. This definition is in the context of our topic. The federal government controls the other tiers of government, but the interaction is strictly as stated in the Nigerian constitution, the constitution allots more control of the local governments to the states, that explains why the executive and legislative arms at the state checkmate and supervise the workings and activities at the local governments (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Akindele and Olaopa, 2002; Adeyemi, 2019; Emezi, 1979; Chinda, 2016).

It must be clearly stated that the issue of local government autonomy and intergovernmental relations came to the fore or front burner under the civilian rule, which started in 1999. Under the military regime the financial autonomy of the local governments was never compromised. The local governments were under the states just as they are today. Even the second and third republics maintained the same administrative structure. The difference is that then, it was a common understanding that the third tier of government needed financial autonomy, so as to drive development at the grass-root where the population of every state is more. Today the financial autonomy of the third tier of government in most states have been muzzled and that explains the question on the lips of many Nigerians, do we really need the third tier of government? This is because in most local governments nothing is happening in terms of development, again states do

monthly joint accounts, after federation accounts with the local governments and what is given to them by the states from what was allocated by FAAC is not normally enough to initiate any development project at the grass root (Idada and Isiraojie, 2017; Egware, Akporien, and Otuya, 2021; Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012). The control of local government by the states is so strict in some states that local governments chairmen or whoever, is in charge of the local government has to justify or defend every project, before the state will release money to them for the project. This development has led to the collapse of the once vibrant third tier of government in Nigeria (Idada and Isiraojie, 2017). In Edo state the Deputy Governor Philip Shuaibu once visited one of the local governments in the state only for him to discover the degradation in the local government administration to the point that the revenue collection in the local government was down and the whole local governments in the state were claiming to have generated only ₦3 million in a year. In most states the states are not interested in the local governments functioning to fulfil the mandate for which they were established. The interest of the states is to control the allocations of the local governments (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Adeyemi, 2013).

Three-Tier System of Government in Nigeria

Many groups have governments—people who are in charge. Schools and clubs are two examples. Usually, however, the word *government* refers to the people in charge of a country, a state, or a city. The people in charge have a system for *governing* (ruling). This system for governing is also referred to as a government. Nigeria for instance has a system of government which is divided into three tiers. The central government is called the federal government, then the states which are under the federal government, and finally the local governments, which are under the states. The local governments handle governance at the grass root, they are the ones that are closer to the rural populace. The basic function of a government is to provide stability. It does so by maintaining order within a country and by protecting the country's borders from outside attack. Governments make laws and enforce laws to protect people's rights. They organize a country's military defenses, and they make agreements with other countries to keep peace. Governments also provide many services, such as schools, parks, sewage systems, and streets and highways. They print money and make coins. They generally regulate, or control, activities such as trade and transportation. Government regulations may also protect people against faulty products, unclean water and air, and other dangers (Emezi, 1979; www.microsoftkidsencarta.com).

Different Types of government

To understand how the three-tiers of government works, let's look at different types of government. People have developed several different types of government over the course of history. One is monarchy. In this type of government, one person is the monarch, usually a king or queen, or an emperor or empress. When a monarch dies, power passes to one of the monarch's children or, if there are no children, to another family member. In the past, monarchs were completely in charge of their countries. They chose all other officials. Today, most monarchs have much less power. The United Kingdom, for example, has a monarch with very limited powers (Emezi, 1979; www.microsoftkidsencarta.com).

A second type of government is the republic. In a republic, the people elect (choose) the rulers and top officials. These rulers and officials do not hold power for life. They are elected for a specific period of time. After that time is up, the group chooses another ruler. Most democracies, like the United States, are also republics. In a democratic republic, the people have rights that no ruler may cut off. The people can also replace their rulers.

Republics can turn into dictatorships. In a dictatorship, one person—the dictator—has total power. Dictators can usually do whatever they want. Everyone must obey a dictator. In some dictatorships, a small group rules, rather than one individual. In a military dictatorship, the ruling officials are military officers. Some dictatorships call themselves republics (Emezi, 1979; Adewunmi and Egwurube, 1985; Walter, 2017; www.microsoftkidsencarta.com).

Many countries have a federal system. In a federal system, power is shared between a central government and smaller government units. In the United States, for example, there is a federal, or central government for the entire country. In addition, each of the 50 states has its own government. In Nigeria we have a federal government, 36 states and 774 local governments. The 36 states exclude the federal capital territory Abuja (Emezi, 1979; Adewunmi and Egwurube, 1985; Walter, 2017; www.microsoftkidsencarta.com).

In some matters, the state governments have final say. In other matters, the federal government rules. Each state, for example, sets its own speed limits. Only the federal government, however, can mint money or declare war. The areas of jurisdiction of the various tiers of government in Nigeria is clearly spelt out by the constitution, although sometimes there are fragrant cases of encroachment. In Nigeria all mineral resources are controlled by the federal government, likewise all waterways and rivers. Some spheres of control are in the concurrent list of the constitution, whereas, some are in the exclusive list of the three-tier of government in the constitution (Emezi, 1979; Adewunmi and Egwurube, 1985; Walter, 2017; www.microsoftkidsencarta.com).

Local Government Administration in Nigeria

Local government is the government at the grassroots closest to the people. It is the tier of government administration that coordinates the activities of citizens at the local community levels. Local government as a concept of government existed long before the arrival of the colonialists. There were forms of local government administrations in Nigeria before colonial rule. During colonialism, the British's indirect rule system was built upon existing local administrations in Nigeria. However, the story is not the same for local government administration regarding structure and organization in the country today. The word administration in the context of the heading means the management of public affairs or the affairs of a government, and in this case the local government (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023).

Since the 1950s, when the federal system came into operation in Nigeria, local government administration has received considerable scholarly attention (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015), observed four major epochs in the development of the local government system in Nigeria: (i) colonial rule, which was based on the traditional administrative system, and existed from 1903 until the 1950s when the native authority system became obsolete; (ii) the more liberal and participatory approach to local governance introduced in the 1950s; (iii) the advent of military rule, which replaced the model of grassroots participatory democracy with military centralization and a 'unity of command' scheme; and (iv) the comprehensive reform of local government administration in 1976, which restored liberal participatory values.

The impact of these last two epochs on the structure and operational dynamics of local government in Nigeria is still felt. Firstly, the centralization introduced under military rule has remained a major influence in the relationship between the federal government and local government. Secondly, the reform of local government in 1976 has continued to shape subsequent discourse

and reforms. It is instructive to note that the 1976 reform acknowledged the local government system as government at local level, established by law, with defined powers. Fig.1 shows the map of Nigeria with the 36 states, 774 local government areas and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

According to Emezi (1979) the local government is the grassroots government because of its closeness to the rural communities. Local administration on the other hand is the management and administration of local government affairs. Local government is responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. Among them are well known functions such as social care, schools, housing and planning and waste collection, but also lesser known ones such as licensing, business support, registrar services and pest control. Here in Nigeria the local governments were in charge of primary health care and responsible for building of primary health clinics in the rural areas and staffing them. They are also in charge of constructing roads at the local level and maintaining them, a task that has become nearly impossible in our Nigeria of today (Emezi, 1979; Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). According to Adeyemi (2019), the Local government administration in Nigeria is as old as history and it dates back pre-colonial era. It had been part of the system of government among ethnic groups in Nigeria particularly the Yoruba in the West, Hausa/Fulani in the North and the Igbo in the East. Each ethnic group operating it as it suits their cultural value. Under colonial administration, it was known as indirect rule system. It was an attempt to govern the people through their chief. At independence and thereafter, the system has since been restructured and reorganized depending on the regime and the nature of government in power. These changes have made it to pass through series of uncertainties and with peculiar characteristics (Adewunmi and Egwurube, 1985; Adeyemi, 2019).

Under the 1999 constitution, Nigeria has a single tier system of local government. One other significant provision on local government in the constitution is the clear creation of room for separation of powers. The Executive Arm of local government consists of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Supervisors and Secretary. Under the legislative arm they have elected councilors who are the representative of the various council wards that make up the local government. The legislative arm is headed by the speaker who is the leader of the legislative council (Chinda, 2016). Ibietan and Ndukwe (2014) in their research on local government administration has this to say 'the performance of local governments in Nigeria, especially in the fourth republic can be interrogated through the Efficiency Services theory. The kernel of this theory is that local government acts as an efficient agent for providing services that are local in character. Through a heavy reliance on secondary data backed by practical observation and analytical framework, the paper observed that the leading personnel, policy outcomes and political/administrative environments of local government administration in Nigeria (within the period of study) portrayed them as failed institutions' (Ibietan and Ndukwe).



Fig.1: Map of Nigeria Showing the 36 States, 774 local government Areas and the FCT Abuja (Source: Wikipedia.com)

Local Administration during pre-colonial and colonial Era

According to Adeyemi (2019), the Local government administration in Nigeria is as old as history and it dates back to pre-colonial era. It had been part of system of government among ethnic groups in Nigeria particularly the Yoruba in the West, Hausa/Fulani in the North and the Igbo in the East. Each ethnic group operating it as it suits their cultural value. Under colonial administration, it was known as indirect rule system. It was an attempt to govern the people through their chief. At independence and thereafter, the system has, since been restructured and reorganized depending on the regime and the nature of government in power. These changes have made it to pass through series of uncertainties and with peculiar characteristics. The Tiv people of Benue state in pre-colonial era had a unique system of local administration which was from head of family to village head to clan head to district head and the head was always the oldest person at that level, so in essence leadership in Tiv land was by age. When the colonial masters came they were amazed at that type of governance and how effective it was (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Adeyemi, 2019; Etebom and Wijaya; 2023).

According to Abati and Kugbayi (2020), local government system in Nigeria has its antecedence in the pre-colonial era when each of the separate communities that make up today's Nigeria was administered in what has been variedly described by scholars as provincial, kingship, empires systems, etc. (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). However, some discussions take the colonial period as the inception. These pre-colonial systems of local governance were very simple, but with variation from place to place. Aleyomi (2013) said 'the history of local government systems in Nigeria dates back to colonial days. The name, structure and composition have experienced different changes over the years. During the 1930s and 1940s, for instance, local government was known as chief-in-council and chief-and-council, where traditional rulers were given pride of place in the scheme of things. In the 1950s, elections were introduced according to the British model in the western and eastern parts of the country with some measure of autonomy in personnel, financial and general administration (Aleyomi, 2013). It was on this premise that the rising tide of progress, growth and development experienced in the local governments in these areas was based. The pace of this development was more noticeable in the south than in the north. During this period, heterogeneity was the hallmark of local government as there was no uniformity in the system and the level of development was also remarkably different. The introduction of the 1976 reforms by the military administration of General Obasanjo brought about uniformity in the administrative structure of the system. The reforms introduced a multi-

purpose single-tier local government system (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibieta and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). Efficient systems of native administration had existed in the various parts of Nigeria before the coming of the Europeans (Adewunmi and Egwurube, 1985). This was particularly the case in the northern and western parts of Nigeria, where the existing systems of traditional administration provided the colonial authorities with a much-needed workable basis for introducing the indirect rule system of governance, first in the Northern Protectorate and later in the Southern Protectorate. Between 1900 and 1950, the Nigerian colonial authorities consisted mainly of traditional office holders whose main functions, according to Adewunmi and Egwurube (1985), were to maintain law and order and generally act as agents for the colonial government by providing certain basic services in their respective localities. With the pressure generated by the nationalist struggle for democratization and self-rule that emerged in the 1950s, more modern local government councils with elected members increased responsibilities and enhanced financial status.

Local Government Autonomy

Autonomy in the context of the topic simply means political independence and self- government, if that is what local government autonomy means, can we say Nigerian local governments are autonomous? The fact is that there is undue interference from the states. Elected Chairmen of local governments, who are supposed to serve 3 or 4 years are removed from office at the whims and caprices of the governors without reverting to the constitution as per the tenure of these elected Chairmen. The method of electing the Chairmen too is more like selection and not election because the governors decide who becomes a Chairman and councilor. There may be something like elections organized by the state electoral body, but the reality is always that the names of successful people are normally prewritten, and that explains why if a party is in power in a state all the chairmen of local governments are always from that party. There is hardly a local government in Nigeria today that is carrying out its mandate as contained in the constitution. According to NOUN (2023), local government system exists in every country with variations in its structures and functions. Some countries operate single-tier system, where one local government exercises all the powers and performs all the functions, single-tier structural framework, where two or more local government share responsibilities for providing a range of services to the citizens in a defined area (NOUN, 2023). The state governments have ensured that the local governments are incapacitated from performing projects at the grass root. The worse aspect of autonomy that has been stripped from the local governments is financial autonomy (Akindele and Olaopa, 2002; Walter, 2017; Idada and siraojie, 2017). Because Chairman are not elected by the electoral votes of the majority the Chairmen are completely answerable to the governors and they must surrender the federal allocation of the local government to the state and the governors now decide what goes to the local governments. The stripping of financial autonomy is what has ground local government administration completely in Nigeria (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibieta and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). Some local government secretariats have become so dilapidated without renovation in view. This has created disincentive in the staff, some the staff only go to work when salaries are paid. Poor remuneration, lack of promotion, lack of annual increment, and in some cases lack of salaries, because the states hijack the monies that would have taken care of these. The unfortunate thing is that the federal government lacks the will power to check the excesses by the state governments. A law was passed by the regime of Ex-President Muhammadu Buhari to remit local government allocation into their bank accounts, it is however, pertinent to mention that without proper

monitoring from the federal government the status quo will remain. The states and by extension the governors will find a way of collecting all the monies back from the local governments through what is called state joint account (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023).

A study was conducted by Etebom and Wijaya, (2010), which revealed that local government administration in Nigeria has passed through torturous phases. It identified the lack of local government autonomy amongst others as the main challenge bedeviling its development in the country. Adeyemi (2019) in his paper finds out that, the current state of Local Government in Nigeria is characterised by unbridled interference of the State Government and therefore recommends that, there is need to review the Constitution to make Local Government autonomous especially on the issues of fiscal power, functions and responsibilities. Abdulhamid and Chima (2015) posited that ‘in the general discourse on the local government system in Nigeria, two major influences are notable: the intervention of the military in politics, and the 1976 reform of local government. However, the 1979 constitution, which provided the legal framework for the 1976 reforms, plunged the local government system into a crisis of identity, and ever since local government in Nigeria has remained an idea in search of relevance.’ They examined both the inherent weakness of the constitutional foundation and the contradictions created by the 1976 reforms. Using a theoretical analysis, the paper discovered that the combined effects of constitutional gaps and reform contradictions have rendered Nigeria’s system of local government an unfortunate ‘orphan’, and that, lacking a strong constitutional foundation, local government in Nigeria has been subject to the whims of both state and federal governments. They argued in the paper that, despite numerous constitutional developments, current constitutional provisions for local government in Nigeria leave much to be desired. The recommendations to improve the system include that: local government should be given the status of a federating unit in the constitution, with its powers and functions clearly spelt out; the constitutionally mandated, State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) should be abolished; and the constitution should be amended to create a chapter which guarantees the identity and autonomy of local government as a third tier of government. Chinda (2016), recommends direct funding of the local government administration by the federal government. Idada and Isiraojie (2017) in their research concluded that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should be amended to enable State Governments and the various State Houses of Assembly loosen their firm grip on the local governments in order to allow the local government authorities to provide the much needed goods and services for the people.

Local governments are created with the ultimate goal of bringing government closer to the people at the grassroots. In Nigeria, the local government reforms aimed both to accelerate development and to enable the local population participate and hold those in power accountable for their governance roles. However, a true third tier has never taken off in the governance structure of Nigeria, despite the widespread endorsement of local government as a potent system to mobilise people for local participation in governance. Several studies (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibietan and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023) have established the challenges bedevilling the Nigerian local government system, including issues such as poor funding, paucity of human capital, corruption, poor service delivery etc. However, little attention has been given to the deficiencies in the constitutional framework and the reforms that have shaped the operation of local government in Nigeria. Abdulhamid and Chima (2015) said ‘in the second schedule of the 1999 constitution, two types of legislative power are categorised, namely the Exclusive Legislative List and the Concurrent

Legislative List. It is curious to note that in the Concurrent Legislative List no mention is made of local government – a situation that further undermines the third-tier status of LGs’.

Moreover, a close perusal of the fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution, where the functions of local government are listed, reveals that local government councils are effectively administrative units of state government. For example, item 2(d) referring to the functions of local councils provides that: “The functions of a local government council in the government of a state as respects the following matters... and such other functions as may be conferred on local government councils by the House of Assembly of the state”. This provision grants state governments unfettered discretion to decide on what local governments within their state can or should do, or to usurp some of the specific local government functions set out in item 1 (a)–(k).

Finally, the attempt by the reform of 1976 to accord financial autonomy to LGs was undermined by the 1999 constitution through the introduction of the State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA). In the 1976 reform, it was envisaged that democratic federalism would start by extending popular participation to the unit of government closest to the people, i.e. local government. This would require a workable degree of financial autonomy recognised by the constitution. However, creation of the contentious SJLGA has frustrated attempts to establish the third-tier status of local governments (Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015).

Intergovernmental Relations Between the Three-Tiers of Government

Intergovernmental relations between the three-tiers of government is clearly defined in the Nigerian constitution. The constitution captures the responsibilities of every tier of government and where flaws or ambiguities exist they can be interpreted by the courts of law and where it is clear that the position of the constitution is detrimental to progress and general good of the masses such a section of the constitution can be presented for amendment by the legislature. As rightly observed above by Abdulhamid and Chima (2015), that there are many constitutional gaps and reform contradictions that have rendered Nigeria’s system of local government an unfortunate ‘orphan’, current constitutional provisions for local governments in Nigeria leave much to be desired. This statement clearly shows that the relationship between the local government and the other tiers of government is not smooth as it should be. The constitutional provisions as they are today have made the two tiers of government to take undue advantage of the local government administration. The local governments are answerable to the states and to the federal government. The states do not recognize the local governments as being independent or autonomous, but as integral part of the states, here lies the major problem of the autonomy of the local governments. Most of the interferences in the autonomy of the local governments comes from the states (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibieta and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Adeyeye, 2016; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; NOUN, 2023). In the past most local governments had the capacity to collect taxes for development purpose in the local government. They had the capacity to monitor primary schools and make improvements. They had the capacity to monitor forest resources and conservation of other resources because they were closer to these resources. Today the reverse is the case, most local governments are under staff, the states claim there is no money, despite the federal government making monthly allocation to the local governments. During the last local government staff audit in Benue state it was realized that most of the local government in that state were under-staffed. Local governments that used to have more than 1000 staff could only boast of 400 staff, and others too had lesser number of staff, this was so because the states control even employment at the local governments. The functions of local government according to the constitution includes the following:

- Economic recommendations to the State.
- Collection of taxes and fees.
- Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm.
- Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts.
- Establishment, maintenance and regulation of markets, motor parks and public conveniences.
- Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, drainages and other public highways, parks, and open spaces.
- Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses within their local government areas.
- Provision and maintenance of public transportation and refuse disposal systems.
- Registration of births, deaths and marriages in their locality.
- Assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State.
- Control and regulation of outdoor advertising, movement and keeping of pets of all descriptions, shops and kiosks, restaurants and other places for sale of food to the public, and laundrie (Diejomaoh and Eboh, 2012; Aleyomi, 2013; Ibieta and Ndukwe, 2014; Abdulhamid and Chima, 2015; Abati and Kugbayi, 2020; Egware, Akporien, and Otuya, 2021; NOUN, 2023)

Local Government Administration and Autonomy and Issues Around Intergovernmental Relations

Local government administration and autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations are the defining factors that have shaped the local governments in Nigeria today. The local government which is the third tier of government under the federal system of government in Nigeria has never being allowed to operate independently or autonomously. The greatest interference has always been from the state, which sees the local government as an integral part of the state government. The states see the local governments as a means of getting more monies from the federal government rather than seeing them as development units that are closer to the grass root communities. The relationship between the local governments have never been smooth, but rather coercive in nature. Abdulhamid and Chima (2015) in their paper discovered that the combined effects of constitutional gaps and reform contradictions have rendered Nigeria's system of local government an unfortunate 'orphan', and that, lacking a strong constitutional foundation, local government in Nigeria has been subject to the whims of both state and federal governments. They argued in the paper that, despite numerous constitutional developments, current constitutional provisions for local government in Nigeria leave much to be desired. The recommendations to improve the system include that: local government should be given the status of a federating unit in the constitution, with its powers and functions clearly spelt out; the constitutionally mandated State Joint Local Government Account (SJLGA) should be abolished; and the constitution should be amended to create a chapter which guarantees the identity and autonomy of local government as a third tier of government.' This statement clearly shows that the administrative relationship between the local government, state and federal governments is not smooth as it should be. The constitutional provisions as they are today have made the two tiers of government to take undue advantage of the local government administration. The local governments are answerable to the states and to the federal government. The states do not recognize the local governments as being independent or autonomous, but as integral part of the states, here lies the major problem of the

autonomy of the local governments. Most of the interferences in the autonomy of the local governments comes from the states. In the past most local governments had the capacity to collect taxes for development purpose in the local government. They had the capacity to monitor primary schools and make improvements. They had the capacity to build primary health clinics. They had the capacity to construct both township and rural roads. They had the capacity to monitor forest resources and conservation of other resources because they were closer to these resources, Today the reverse is the case most local governments are under-staff, the states claim there is no money, despite the federal government making monthly allocations to the local governments. These monies end in the coffers of the state governments. Diejomaoh and Eboh (2012) in examining the deficiencies of the local government system in Nigeria, opined that one of the major issues seem to be a problem of accountability of local governments along with serious capacity issues.

Conclusion

This topic local government administration and autonomy and issues around intergovernmental relations is a very cogent and relevant topic. A lot of battles have been fought, back and forth by the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) for autonomy and freedom to operate as a third tier of government for grass-root development. This struggle actually started with the advent of the fourth republic and democratic rule in May, 1999, when there was so much perceived encroachment by the state governments on the autonomy of the local governments. At the commencement of the democratic rule in 1999 the civilian government maintained the intergovernmental relations that existed during the military administration. However, after four years of the civilian administration some state governors started questioning the financial autonomy of the local governments, which is the third tier of government. This action has completely eroded the effectiveness of the once vibrant third-tier of government. In this current political dispensation, they are often denied of their financial allocations by the state governments causing development to stall at the grassroots of Nigerian society. It is only hoped that with the passage of the local government administration autonomy law by the President things will change for the better.

Recommendations for Repositioning Local Governments for Effective Local Government Administration in Nigeria

For there to be a vibrant local government administration as it used to be in the 70s and 80s when local governments had the capacity to do town planning in their areas, build primary schools, construct roads and do regular maintenance the following has to be done.

1. Several researchers have argued that there has to be a constitutional review that will arrogate autonomy to the local governments and clearly spelt out the functions and the responsibilities of the local governments.
2. The state governments should stop tampering with the monthly allocations of the local governments
3. The federal government should prosecute any Chairman of local government who gives his monthly allocation to the governor or state.
4. Township planning at the local government level should be the responsibility of the local government and not the state. Also ground rent should be collected by the local governments.
5. Responsibilities that are spelt out in the constitution for the local governments should be carried out by them. The state and federal government should stop the usurpation of local government responsibilities and function.

6. Forestry conservation and recreation should be the responsibility of the local government particularly local resources
7. Local governments should live up to their tax drive for development purpose since this will augment monthly allocation from the federation account.
8. Elections into local government offices should be done transparently for the right people to occupy the offices
9. Governors should stop imposing chairmen of local governments on the people
10. True democracy should be practiced at the local government administration
11. The recently passed local government autonomy bill which has been signed into law should be fully implement by the federal government including financial autonomy.

References

- Abati, O.O. and Kugbayi, .O.(2020) Local Government System in Nigeria, accessed online on the 26/11/2023 @ www.livingreferenceworkentry.com
- Abdulhamid, O.S. and Chima, P. (2015) Local Government Administration in Nigeria: The Search for Relevance, Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance 2015, 18:4850. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v0i18.4850>.
- Aleyomi, M.B. (2013) Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Review, Africana, Vol.6 (2), 33-47.
- Akindele, S.T. and Olaopa, O.R. (2002) Fiscal Federalism and Local Government Finance in Nigeria, International Review of Administrative Sciences, Vol.68 (4) pp557-577.
- Adewunmi, J.B. and Egwurube, J. (1985) Role of Traditional Rulers in Historical Perspectives. In: Aborisade O (ed) Local Government and the traditional Rulers in Nigeria. University of Ife Press, Ile-Ife.
- Adeyemi, O.O. (2019) Local Government Administration in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective, journal of Public Administration and Governance, Macrothink Institute, Vol.9 (2) 161-179.
- Adeyeye, M.O. (2016) Governing the Localities: Lesson (UN) Learnt, 284 Series Inaugural Lecture, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at Oduduwa Hall, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, on Tuesday, 22nd March, 2016.
- Chinda, I. (2016) Challenges of Local Government Administration in Nigeria, accessed at www.academia.edu/publishing .com on the 26/11/2023
- Diejomaoh, I and Eboh, E (2012) Local Governments in Nigeria: Relevance and Effectiveness in poverty Reduction and Economic Development, JEL, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2045439> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2045439>.
- Egware, O.N, Akporien, O.F., and Otuya, S. (2021) Financial Autonomy as an Aid to Rural Development: A study of Isoko North Local Government Area of Delta State AJAFR, 4 (3) P63.
- Emezi, C.E.(1979) Concept in the Development of Local Government Administration in Nigeria, Verfassung Und Recht in Ubersee/ Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Vol.12 (4), Pp 371-382.
- Etebom, J.M. and Wijaya, J.H., The Historical Development of Local Government Administration and its Contemporary Realities in Nigeria, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55314/tsg.v3i1.226>
- Ibietan, J. and Ndukwe, P. (2014) Local Government Administration in Nigeria and Community Development: The Efficiency Services Interrogation, International Journal of Management Sciences, 3(10), 751-764
- Idada, Walter and Isiraoje. L.(2017) Constraints of Local Government Administration in Nigeria, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2010.11892848>
- NOUN (2023) Lecture Notes on Nigerian Local Government. Faculty of Social Sciences, accessed at <https://nou.edu.ng/courseware/content/PAD>
- Walter, I..(2017) Problems of Democratic Governance in Nigeria: The Way Forward, Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology
www.wikipedia.com
www.microsoft.com/kidencarta
www.encyclopedia.com